



Original Article

Analysis of the Effects of the Home Environment Systems on Secondary School Re-Admission among Student Mothers in Marani Sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya

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The challenges of motherhood coupled with the coming of new roles and identities for student mothers remain pervasive and have conspired to continue constraining girls from participating in education. The consequences of becoming pregnant are many. The study explored the extent to which student-mothers receive emotional and social support both at home and at school in adjusting and coping with their dual roles as mothers and students. The study was conducted at Marani Sub-County of Kisii County. The study employed a descriptive survey design and the target population was 779, while the sample size was 234. The stratified sampling technique was used to select the school teenage mothers, while the census method was applied for both principals and teacher counsellors since they were few. Pilot testing of the research instruments was undertaken to ascertain both validity and reliability so as to guard against the threats of ambiguities and biases. This was done by subjecting the instruments to subject matter experts as well as trying them out within field conditions. Reliability was ascertained via the test-retest method. Data were collected from respondents by the use of special designed questionnaires and interview schedules. The information obtained was analysed by the use of descriptive statistics such as counting frequencies and mean. Qualitative data for teacher counsellors were analysed using the themes method. Data were presented in tables and figures. The process by which data was analysed started with coding, scoring, and screening for errors. Then data were entered into the SPSS program, after which data exploration and cleaning were done before starting to mine information. This is because the accuracy of any conclusions depends on the accuracy of the data to yield inferences. The findings of the study indicated that the home and school environments, as well as emotional support, were

influencing secondary school re-entry among student mothers in Kenya. Further, the study shows student mothers can be motivated to re-join school to improve their future life. The research therefore recommended that the government and other stakeholders need to put psychosocial systems in place for the readmission of secondary school student mothers so as to put their livelihood back on track.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that teenage pregnancies have been lessening worldwide since the 1990s, some studies show that 11% of all births global are still attributed to girls aged between 15 and 19 years old. The majority of teen pregnancy, accounting for 95%, happens in either low or middle developed nations with average global statistics birth rate of 49 per 1000 girls (UNFPA, 2015). Country statistics rates differ substantially. They range from 1 birth per 1000 girls in developed countries to 299 births per 1000 girls in less developed countries, with the highest rates occurring in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO, 2014).

This particular policy, primarily focusing on schoolgirl pregnancy, has been classified either as a re-entry as well a continuation policy (Chilisa, 2002). These policies are anchored on both MDG 3 and EFA Goal number 5, which identifies educational access as being unequal for boys and girls. The goal of this policy is to mitigate the

exclusion of young mothers from furthering their education. The Ministry of Education guidelines have clear guidelines that assist schools and other education stakeholders with resources that can help that girl child to further education until the last point.

The policy calls for the return of teenage mothers to school, and counselling for these girls, their significant others, teachers, and other students in the school. Given that there is a lack of sufficient administrative, socio-cultural, religious, legal, and psychosocial support, the implementation of this policy makes it weak and almost non-existent. One wonders what measures would be taken in the home and school environments in an effort to upscale implementation of the policy. What changes could be made at home and in school to convince student mothers and motivate them to seek secondary school re-entry?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The home environment is critical for any student-mothers to successfully negotiate the return to school. For a young teen mother, one of the critical factors that shape the way she negotiates her daily lives in the household, schools, and community at large is the gender relations in the households. The balance of authority in the home setting implies that they are forced to socially prescribe to their previous role as daughter and child and fit in with their role as a mother. Whether or not the young adolescent will manage to adjust to this set of diverse roles is what will determine the way they negotiate with the structure of the household.

According to Wekesa (2010), at the household level, three key factors determine the chances of young mothers returning to formal schooling. They include whether the father as household head supports the decision, material support from the young mother's parents, and the structure of the household. Given that gender relations confer uneven authority between fathers and mothers, the decision to return to school must be supported by the head of the household. The situation becomes even dire when the young mothers live with stepfathers due to the interaction of patriarchy, and the unstable household structures come to play to the disadvantage of the young woman. Equally disadvantageous is a situation where households are led by older women who may not be under direct male authority and so have no leeway to negotiate for their daughter's school re-entry. Older mothers are powerless to safeguard their daughter's right to remain within the household after childbearing and by large, their right to educational support (Wekesa, 2010). This study will investigate who finally has a say on young mothers' school re-entry. Another factor on the household level is the family's socioeconomic status. However, more importantly, this has to do with how the livelihood arrangements have to be re-organised to cater for the needs of the baby. Poverty makes it difficult for the young mother's family to fully assume the responsibility of meeting the needs of the young mother and her baby. Due to poverty, sometimes young mothers are forced by circumstances and even at times their own parents to engage in prostitution with the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS or seeking lowly paying jobs (Kamaara, 2005).

The socioeconomic status of households is another critical factor that plays a role in the manner in which teen mothers raise their children. As stated by Pogarsky et al.'s (2006) study has established existence of a significant association between child development, parenting outcomes, and economic risk prevailing in households. This means that there are higher chances of having parents bringing their children to a stressful environment when there are serious economic hardships in-home environment, especially where an individual's income does not match their needs.

Similarly, as stated by Mistry et al. (2002), financial hardships affect children's social life, as indicated by studies that serious levels of financial deprivation affect the level of interaction making children be less affectionate than if they did not have financial strain. Similarly, children born in financially deprived families end up having higher chances of having higher levels of psychological problems (Graham & Easter brooks, 2000). Studies also show that children of adolescent mothers who are in a financially handicapped background received harsher discipline and later showed increased externalising issues (Scaramella et al., 2008; Mistry et al., 2002).

Another important factor determining successful parenting by adolescent mothers is a dependable social support network which can influence self-perceptions of parenting. These involve the level of relationships of teen mothers with significant members of a family, which includes own mothers, fathers of the newborn, or peers (Clemmens, 2003). In a situation where such a relationship between teen mother and mother is negative, the teen mothers will approach immediate peers for needed support and then, if not successful, will seek support from the fathers of the newborns, hoping to find them dependable or reliable. According to (Lee, 2009), adolescent mothers who are able to get material and emotional support from the baby's father are able to adjust to life situations more easily and have less chance to use physical aggression toward their children. At the same time according to Cox et al. (2008), mothers who perceive their social to be positive and sufficient do not have a higher chance of developing depressive states than mothers who have insufficient maintenance. The deduction from this analogy is that social support is critical to

cushion young mothers from developing undesirable consequences of maternal depression.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed methods research. The choice of research method was informed by the fact that it complemented the strength and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. The study was based on a descriptive research design which involves studying a phenomenon at the site of the study without interfering or experimenting with elements of the study (Orodho, 2009). The population of interest was 779, which comprised secondary school girls who were mothers, school principals, and the HODs of Guidance and Counselling. The target population within the area of study was 779. For this population, the tables estimating the sample size indicated that 234 respondents were adequate. It was estimated that this sample size yielded a + 5% or a 95% confidence interval. Data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule. Analysis was undertaken using descriptive statistics, which involved frequencies and summations. Whereas the data collected from the respondents were mostly qualitative and descriptive in nature, through coding and scoring of the instrument, quantitative analysis was performed. In this study, the ethical considerations involved informed consent and confidentiality. The researcher obtained the participants' consent and parents/guardians' consent in writing if the participant was a minor before interacting with the participants. The

researcher explained to the participants the purpose and objectives of the study, how the study was to benefit them and that its nature did not require any information of personal nature.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

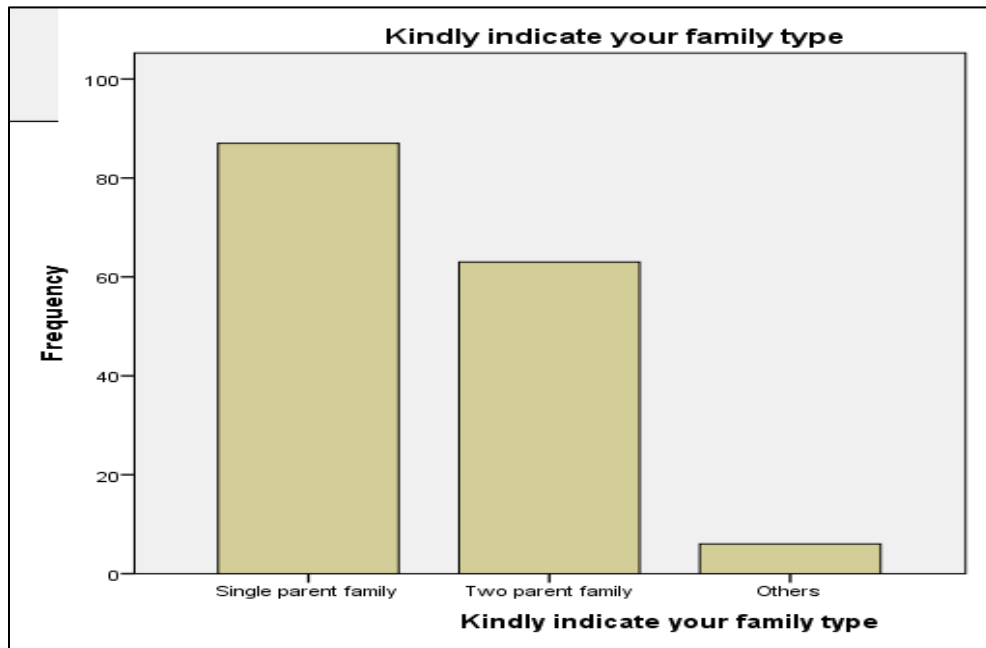
The study sampled 182 student mothers, 26 school heads and 26 teacher counsellors drawn from 26 public secondary schools. The results revealed that 24 school heads and 25 HODs returned the questionnaire while 178 teenage schooling mothers out of the 182 returned the questionnaire giving a response rate of 97%.

Objective one of this study was designed to establish the effects of the home environment on secondary school readmission among student mothers in Marani Sub-County of Kisii County in Kenya. The researcher sought to find out how the teenage mother's family background impacted her school readmission either positively or negatively. Teenage mothers and school heads' responses in regard to the schooling mothers' family background were captured as well as teacher counsellors' views.

Teenage Mothers' Responses to Home Environment

The respondents were asked to indicate the type of family they came from. The responses were as revealed in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1: Family Type

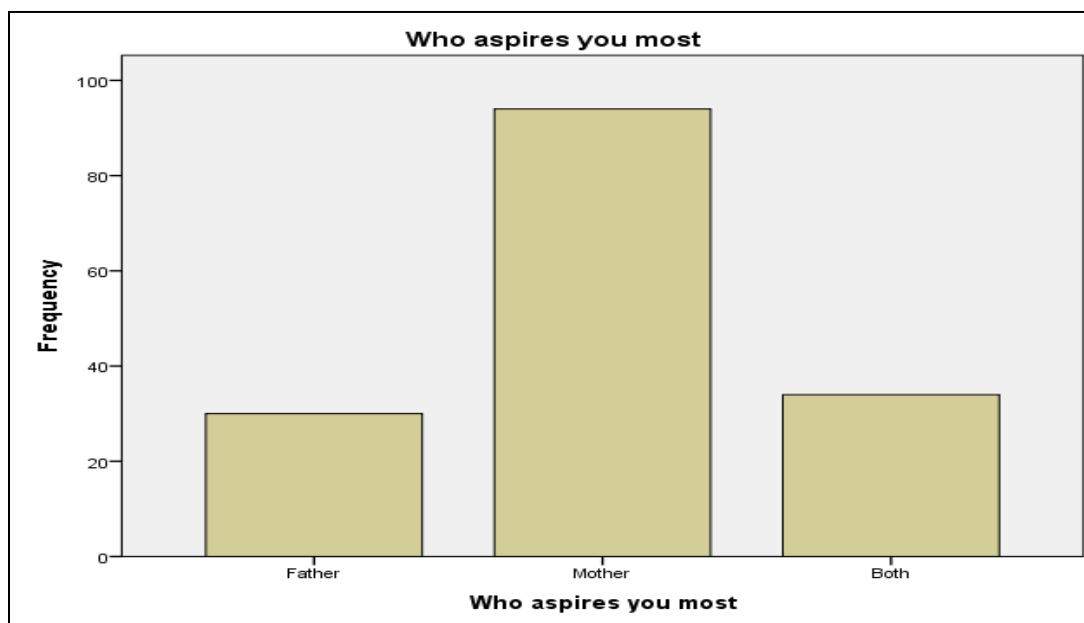


When the teenage mothers were asked to indicate their family type, most of them indicated that they came from single-parent backgrounds. This was represented by 55.1% of the respondents. Those who came from a two-parent family background were represented by 39.9%, while those who fell on the other members' family background were represented by 5.1%.

Who Inspires the Teenage Schooling Mothers?

The teenage schooling mothers were asked to indicate the persons that inspired them the most during and after pregnancy. *Figure 2* generated the findings.

Figure 2: Most Aspiring Parent



The findings show that most teenage schooling mothers agreed that they were inspired by their mothers. This represented about 59.5% of the respondents. Those that were inspired by both of

their parents followed at 21.5%, while those that received their inspiration from their fathers represented 19%.

Table 1: Student mothers' response to the home environment

Statement	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std Dev.
My parent(s) accepted me and provided me with necessary basic needs	19	59.5	13.3	8.2	0	4.17	1.529
My parent(s) encouraged me and helped in taking care of the baby	4.4	31	23.3	1.3	0	3.71	1.686
My parent(s) motivated me to go back to school	30.4	50	11.4	8.2	0	4.14	1.475

Key; SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided; D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Std Dev = Standard deviation

From the data obtained in *Table 1*, it is clear that parents had a mixed reaction toward their teenage mothers. When the respondents were asked whether their parents fully accepted them in their situation and whether they were provided with necessary basic needs, 59% of them agreed to have been supported, while 13 % said their parents were undecided on whether to fully accepted them in their situation and were provided with necessary basic needs while only 8% disagreed of not to have been fully accepted. More than half of the parents (56%) encouraged the school going mothers and helped them in taking care of the baby. On the other hand, 23% of the parents were undecided, and 1.3% did not help in looking after their teenage mothers' babies. As to whether parents motivated the teenage mothers to go back to school, 80% of the parents motivated them, while 11.4% were undecided, and 8.2% did not motivate them to go back to school.

School Heads Responses to Home Environment

When the principals were asked to state whether they usually invite parents to school so as to discuss the welfare of the teenage school mothers at home, all of them (99%) either strongly agreed or agreed. No headteacher said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over 66% of the school heads said that most parents agreed to take care of babies, while

33% of school heads were not sure whether the parents accepted to take care of the babies. 72% of school principals admitted to having sent teachers to find out about the welfare of teenage mothers at home, while 28% of the heads disagreed. 67% of the school heads generally agreed that their school invites parents of teenage mothers to school to inform the school when their daughters are ready to come back to school, while 33% of them either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over half of the school heads strongly agreed that they take parents through counselling programs before readmitting their daughters, while 11% were undecided. This information is captured in *table 2*. All school principals agreed that their schools organised special days for teenage mothers and their parents.

Verbatim from one of the teachers' counsellors that were interviewed suggested that the amount and quality of education that teenage school mothers are restricted on account of the family sizes. The following is what was said:

"In one of the situations where the teen mother had inadequate support, the mother had her own 9 children to take care and complained of could not accommodate another woman in the house".

Table 2: School principals' responses to the home environment

Statement	S	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
The school usually invites parents so as to discuss the welfare of teenage mothers at home.	33.3	66.7	-	-	-	3.48	1.581
The school sends teachers to find out about the welfare of teenage mothers at home.	61.1	11.1	-	27.8	-	3.69	1.490
The school invites parents of teenage mothers to school to inform the school when their daughters are ready to come back to school.	38.9	27.8	-	5.6	27.8	3.81	1.728
The school counsels parents of teenage mothers before re-admitting their daughters.	50	38	11.1	-	-	3.93	1.488
The school usually organises special days for teenage mothers who are home and their parents.	72.2	27.8	-	-	-	4.19	.862

The family sizes were found to determine the extent to which teen school mothers in such a family setting gained attention and got support in their households. The amount of support that teen mothers could receive in the households depended on the number of siblings.

Teenage mothers cannot go back to school without the support of their parents. This is based on the fact that parents need to take care of their daughters and their children. One of the teacher counsellors emphasised:

“Parental support is crucial as the adolescent mother will need someone to take care of the child while she is in school.”

Another teacher counsellor noted that:

“The girls are able to relax and settle down in school if they know that their babies are being taken care of well.”

The findings also indicated that parents expressed anger when they learnt of their daughters' pregnancy status. When the student mothers were asked about how their parents felt when they were informed of this status, most teenage mothers indicated that their parents expressed disappointment to the extent that some of the parents could not forgive and accept their daughters thereafter and consequently failed to support their educational endeavours. These findings are in agreement with Twenges (2002) that the greatest obstacle that makes life difficult for teen mothers come from their close family members. Some

parents develop a severe stereotype against their teen mothers and associate the pregnancy with immorality. In the current study, it is evident that this difficulty has forced most teen mothers to engage in trial marriages with the father of the child, while others had escaped living with relatives because of the rejection they met at home. This may explain the basis of the finding in the current study, where it was established that 65% of head teachers blamed unforgiving parents as the reason which hinders teen mothers from seeking readmission.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The teenage mothers came from a single-parent background with 55.1%; this implied that when teenagers lacked both parents, it increased the chances of them getting pregnant, and a two-parent family represented 39.9%, while those who lived with their guardians were at 5.1%. The teenager got most of their aspiration for their mother at 59.5%. Parents had a mixed reaction toward the teenage mothers. When asked whether the parents motivated them to go back to school, 78% of them agreed to have been supported 9% disagreed about not getting support. More than half of the parents encouraged and helped in taking care of the baby. The teacher counsellors suggested that the teenage mothers get more restricted from getting back to school when the family sizes are taken into consideration. Family sizes also affected the amount of individualised attention that teenage mothers were given. Depending on the number of siblings, a teenage mother had determined how much support she could receive once out of school. Parents got angry when

they learnt of their children were pregnant and expressed disappointment that even some could not forgive and accept their daughters thereafter and consequently failed to support their educational endeavour. Some students had engaged in a kind of trial marriage with the father of the child, while others had gone to live with relatives. 65% of the headteachers agreed that unforgiving parents were to blame for a child not seeking readmission to school.

Teenage mothers should be supported and encouraged to go back to school. Parental support is the key to ensuring that teenagers get all the necessities. This will greatly influence their decision to get back to schools.

From the findings of this study, the researcher wishes to make the recommendations below.

- Parents should be counselled so as to accept their daughters' status so as to be able to support them physically and emotionally and their babies.
- Most schools do not have an effective counselling department. Therefore, there is a need to invest more in the counselling department.
- There is a need for teacher counsellors and parents of the teenage mothers to consult and make follow-ups on the student regularly to check the progress of the student at home and at school
- Teenage mothers should be treated with caution as any ridicule whole easily raises their emotions hence affecting them deeply.

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